

## ***West Haven Public Schools- Dynamic Duo***



A dynamic duo: The talented, dedicated Special Education teacher, Ms. Donenfeld, and her 4th grade student, Michelle, at Pagels Elementary School.

Ms. Donenfeld has had the pleasure of educating Michelle for the past three school years. She speaks with brimming pride for all students, but today she features the abilities and talents of Michelle, “It is incredible watching her grow, her laugh is infectious, she can put a smile on anyone’s face,” Ms. Donenfeld proudly shared.

Michelle not only lights up a room with her warm smile, but also with her artwork. She freehand sketches beloved characters with astonishing attention to detail. Michelle swiftly picks up her crayons, and starting with the character’s eyes, brings her drawings to life. The joy she feels when she is creating her artwork is contagious and inspiring to all those she encounters. Michelle’s drawings are her prized possessions, bringing them home and back to school each day.

Ms. Donenfeld nurtures Michelle’s growth and embraces her visual communication, using it to teach her essential core skills, focusing on self-control, and fostering connections. Ms. Donenfeld and the dedicated team of paraprofessionals and related service providers at Pagels encourage their students to achieve their individual potential by maintaining high expectations, while embracing their diverse abilities. By highlighting every student’s strengths, the classroom becomes an environment, which demonstrates that teaching and learning can and should adapt in order for each student to thrive.

For Michelle, this adaptation has formed a social language that is in many ways richer than words.